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Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Gratis personnel provided by Governments and other entities

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the reports of the Secretary-General containing the quarterly reports on the acceptance of gratis personnel for the periods from 1 January to 31 March 1998, and from 1 April to 30 June 1998 (A/C.5/52/51 and A/C.5/52/56); and referring to the phasing out of the use of gratis personnel in the Secretariat (A/C.5/52/54/Rev.1). During its consideration of the reports, the Advisory Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information.

2. In the report contained in document A/C.5/52/54/Rev.1, dated 10 July 1998, the Secretary-General referred to the request made by the General Assembly in its resolution 51/243 of 15 September 1997 for the expeditious phasing out of gratis personnel throughout the Secretariat. The Secretary-General indicated that, since the Department of Peacekeeping Operations was most affected by that decision, accelerated procedures had been initiated to "ensure the speedy recruitment of staff to replace gratis personnel". Vacancy announcements for posts proposed for conversion from gratis personnel to support account posts in the Secretary-General's report on the support account on peacekeeping operations (A/52/837 and Corr.1), would be circulated. That procedure, as indicated by the Secretary-General, would enable completion of the phasing out of gratis personnel by the end of February 1999 (see para. 4 below).

3. In this regard, the Advisory Committee was further informed during its hearings that a total of 115 vacancy announcements had been circulated to date. Of these, 64 announcements were for civilian-type functions. A total of 3,500 applications had been received and 445 candidates short-listed. The remaining 51 vacancy announcements for military and civilian police functions had been circulated to Member States with an eight-week deadline. As of the date of the hearings, 54 Member States had responded and 705 applications had been received.

4. The recommendations and observations of the Advisory Committee with regard to the support account for peacekeeping operations are contained in its reports dated 7 May 1998 (A/52/892) and 22 September 1998 (A/53/418). The Committee was further informed that, based on the decision to be taken by the General Assembly on the support account, the Secretariat would proceed to send out the recruitment letters before the end of December 1998.

5. The report of the Secretary-General dated 6 May 1998 (A/C.5/52/51) contains the quarterly report on the acceptance of gratis personnel in response to paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 51/243, and covers the period from 1 January to 31 March 1998.

6. The Committee notes from the information provided therein that, during the period covered, 43 type II gratis personnel concluded their assignments, while 33 started their

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service (5 in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 1 at the Economic Commission for Europe, 18 in the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and 9 in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda). The report of the Secretary-General of 15 July 1998 (A/C.5/52/56), which covers the period from 1 April to 30 June 1998, indicated that a total of 14 new type II gratis personnel had started their service during that period (8 in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and 6 at the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia), and that 85 such personnel had concluded their assignment during the same period. The Committee further notes that the number of type II gratis personnel has declined from a total of 256, as at 31 December 1997, to 246 as at 31 March 1998 and to 175 as at 30 June 1998, as indicated in annex III to the above-mentioned Secretary-General's report.

7. The Committee is still of the opinion that the information provided in both quarterly reports fails to demonstrate the extent to which all gratis personnel accepted in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations provide very specialized expertise not available within the Organization, as is required under paragraph 4 (a) of General Assembly resolution 51/243. While acknowledging the difficulties experienced by the Department during the transitional phase towards the completion of the phasing out of gratis personnel, the Committee reiterates its observation, reflected in paragraph 4 of its previous report (A/52/890), and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 52/234 of 26 June 1998, that practically all functions assigned to the gratis personnel referred to in the quarterly reports under consideration should be performed by staff members, and that it is the lack of adequate staff resources that gives rise to the acceptance of type II gratis personnel, rather than the need for very specialized functions not already available in the Secretariat or obtainable through recruitment.

8. The Committee also notes that the gratis personnel accepted in both tribunals are to carry out specialized functions "pending completion of the recruitment procedures against posts approved by the General Assembly in the Tribunal's budget". The Committee reiterates its statement made in paragraph 6 of its previous report (A/52/890), and endorsed by the General Assembly in paragraph 8 of its resolution 52/234, that "this action contravenes the procedures and provisions of resolution 51/243, which do not allow acceptance of gratis personnel on the grounds of failure by the Secretariat to recruit staff in an expeditious manner".

9. The Advisory Committee recommends that future quarterly reports of the Secretary-General, besides taking into account the comments made in paragraph 7 and 8 above, clearly demonstrate the acceptance of gratis personnel in strict accordance with the provisions contained in paragraphs 4 (a) and 4 (b) of resolution 51/243, indicate the number of staff in those areas where gratis personnel have been accepted to perform those functions, and provide information on compliance with the deadlines of engagement of such personnel (which hitherto has not been available). The Committee also points out that the next report to be issued by the Secretary-General should cover the period from 1 July 1998 to 30 September 1998, and should incorporate the annual report, as requested by the General Assembly in paragraph 12 of its resolution 51/243.